



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Heather Bond Somers and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, June 3, 2014

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Schmidt.

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Somers

Members Absent: Councilor Watson

Councilor Watson arrived later in the meeting.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Human Resources Director Bob Zagami and Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Councilors participated in the Salute to the Flag.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2014-0174 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of May 20, 2014 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2014-0153 Appointment to Zoning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2014-0112 Request for Proposals to Review Zoning Regulations and Plan of Conservation and Development

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2014-0142 Establishment of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 15)

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2014-0143 Establishment of Tax Rate for Mumford Cove District Fund (FYE 15)

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2014-0144 Establishment of Tax Rate for Groton Sewer District Fund (FYE 15)

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2014-0147 Resolution Committing \$2.7 Million for Future Tax Relief

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar. The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Watson arrived at this point in the meeting.

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Somers and Councilor Watson

VII. COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilor de la Cruz commended the Town for the positioning of flags on Memorial Day.

Councilor Frink attended a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) meeting and the Crystal Lake Road condition assessment tour.

Councilor Moravsik toured the Police Station with Chief Steve Smith and attended a meeting of the Personnel & Appointments Committee.

Councilor Flax received a call from a resident of Seneca Drive who would like to cut back the vegetation on a piece of Town-owned property accross from his home. Contact information will be given to the Town Manager who will address this issue with the citizen.

Councilor Cerf attended a POCD meeting and the Noank Memorial Day parade

Mayor Schmidt attended the re-opening of the Zbierski House, the annual meeting of the Old Mystic Fire District and the Crystal Lake Road condition assessment tour. She received a call about parking spaces in downtown Mystic. The Mayor reminded viewers about an event commemorating the Battle of Midway at the Groton SubVets on June 4 and Connecticut Trails Day this weekend. The Mayor congratulated the Fitch Senior High robotics team on their recent victory.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs noted that the next regular meeting of the RTM is scheduled for June 11, 2014.

c. Clerk of the Council

No communications.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that he is trying to schedule a discussion with State legislators about a number of issues including the Education budget and the minimum budget requirement. Tuesday June 10 has been identified as a possible date for the discussion. Mr. Oefinger asked councilors to think about other issues they would like to discuss.

Councilor Frink feels that the Superintendent and Board of Education should be involved in the discussion and would like the Town to make a presentation to the legislators regarding the Town's fiscal situation.

Councilor Somers suggested that the legislators make a presentation to the Council on the State budget.

Councilor Watson noted that he will contact Chairman Ed Martin about issues involving the Shellfish Commission that he would like to put on next week's agenda.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community Relations - Chairman de la Cruz

No meeting; no report.

b. Finance - Chairman Frink

No meeting; no report.

c. Personnel & Appointments - Chairman Flax

Councilor Flax reported that the Golf Advisory Board met on June 2. The golf course is offering a rebate to individuals who bring in new members and has gained 58 new members in the last month. He added that the golf course has a new dog. Councilor Flax will be moving to suspend the rules later in this meeting in order to approve the Golf Ranger job description.

d. Rules - Chairman Frink

No meeting; no report.

e. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Schmidt

The Committee of the Whole discussed the items on tonight's agenda.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

2014-0112

Request for Proposals to Review Zoning Regulations and Plan of Conservation and Development

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO ISSUE A REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS TO REVIEW THE ZONING REGULATIONS

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager is authorized to initiate and issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to perform a review of the Groton Zoning Regulations as outlined on the draft RFQ detail sheet dated May 13, 2014 (attached), and to take all necessary steps to obtain qualifications for the review no later than August 1, 2014.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Councilor Peruzzotti's request for clarification on the discussion and vote that occurred at the COW meeting, it was explained that no one abstained or voted in opposition.

In response to questions from the Councilors regarding the scope of this project, it was noted that this resolution is simply a request for qualifications.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Flax and Councilor Somers

2014-0142

Establishment of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 15)

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING TAX RATE FOR GENERAL FUND TAXES DUE ON JULY 1, 2014

WHEREAS, the Representative Town Meeting has approved a General Fund Budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 providing for expenditure appropriations totaling \$122,782,341, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council estimates cash revenue exclusive of FYE 2015 current property

taxes will total \$42,551,731 therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$3,245,000 is hereby appropriated as fund balance available as of July 1, 2014 to partially meet expenditure appropriations contained in the FYE 2015 General Fund budget, and be it

RESOLVED, that \$76,985,610 is the amount that needs to be raised from property taxes, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the tax rate for taxes due July 1, 2014 is hereby established at 20.13 mills per thousand dollar of assessed valuation to raise \$76,985,610 ($\$76,985,610 \div \$3,897,603,306 \div 98.1\% \times 1,000 = 20.13$ mills).

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Adopted.

Responding to Councilor Watson, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo confirmed that the resolution includes \$900,000 from the unassigned Fund Balance that will be used to offset the mill rate. He added that the resolution reflects a 2.8 percent reduction in the mill rate.

Councilor Watson will vote for this item, since the majority is in favor.

Councilor Cerf supports the resolution and noted that it is important that the Town prepare for upcoming shortfalls in the budget.

Councilor Somers commented that it is the correct decision to return money to the taxpayers.

Mayor Schmidt reminded councilors and viewers that this year's windfall is not the result of overtaxation, but an unforeseen increase in grants and the grand list. She cautioned that shortfalls are anticipated over the next few years.

Councilor Flax observed that in view of the large amount of money in the unassigned Fund Balance, it is the right decision to give a portion of it back to the taxpayers.

Councilor Frink noted that he favors having "money in the bank."

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor Flax, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Somers and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 2 - Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Frink

2014-0143

Establishment of Tax Rate for Mumford Cove District Fund (FYE 15)

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING TAX RATE FOR MUMFORD COVE DISTRICT FUND DUE JULY 1, 2014

WHEREAS, the Representative Town Meeting has approved a Mumford Cove District Fund Budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 providing for expenditure appropriations totaling \$21,038, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council estimated cash revenue exclusive of FYE 2015 current property taxes will total \$108, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$400 is hereby appropriated as fund balance available as of July 1, 2014, to partially meet expenditure appropriations contained in the FYE 2015 Mumford Cove District Fund budget, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the tax rate for taxes due for the Mumford Cove District Fund on July 1, 2014 is hereby established at 0.305 mills per thousand dollar of assessed valuation to raise \$20,530

$(\$20,530 \div \$67,564,950 \div 99.8\% \times 1,000 = 0.305 \text{ mills})$.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0144 Establishment of Tax Rate for Groton Sewer District Fund (FYE 15)

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING TAX RATE FOR GROTON SEWER DISTRICT FUND DUE JULY 1, 2014

WHEREAS, the Representative Town Meeting has approved a Groton Sewer District Fund Budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 providing for expenditure appropriations totaling \$848,896 and

WHEREAS, the Town Council estimated cash revenue exclusive of FYE 2015 current property taxes will total \$27,941, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$225,000 is hereby appropriated as fund balance available as of July 1, 2014, to partially meet expenditure appropriations contained in the FYE 2015 Sewer District Fund budget, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the tax rate for taxes due for the Groton Sewer District Fund on July 1, 2014 is hereby established at 0.25 mills per thousand dollar of assessed valuation to raise \$595,955 $(\$595,955 \div \$2,450,841,132 \text{ (excluding motor vehicles)} \div 98.6\% \times 1,000 = 0.25 \text{ mills})$.

A motion was made by Councilor Cerf, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0147 Resolution Committing \$2.7 Million for Future Tax Relief

RESOLUTION COMMITTING \$2.7 MILLION FOR FUTURE TAX RELIEF

WHEREAS, in developing the FYE 2015 Budget, the Town found itself in an unprecedented and unique position compared to recent/previous budget cycles due to an increase in its unassigned fund balance to \$17.2 million, and

WHEREAS, this was brought about by additional revenues received in FYE 2013 and anticipated for FYE 2014 and FYE 2015 and expenditures coming in under budget in FYE 2013 and anticipated to be under budget in FYE 2014, and

WHEREAS, the Representative Town Meeting adopted on May 19, 2014 a General Fund Budget providing for expenditures, appropriations or expenses totaling \$122,782,341 and

WHEREAS, approximately \$9.5 million (7.75% of expenditures) of the unassigned fund balance is reserved as operating reserves as per the Town Council's Debt Policy and Management/Fiscal Practices as of February 4, 2014, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council authorizes using \$3,245,000 of that assigned fund balance to reduce the mill rate for FYE 2015, and

WHEREAS, the Town is facing tax revenue reductions of approximately \$1.8 million, which will take effect in FYE 2016, associated with Pfizer's decision to demolish Building #118, and

WHEREAS, stabilization of the property tax rate has been a long standing objective, be it

RESOLVED, that \$1.8 million of the unassigned fund balance be committed for FYE 2016 and \$900,000 for FYE 2017 (total \$2.7 million) to offset the loss of revenue from the demolition of Building #118.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Adopted.

The Town Manager explained that a possible decision by Pfizer to demolish additional buildings will not affect the FYE2015 budget.

Councilor Watson will vote in favor of the resolution, since it seems to be the wish of the majority, but he would have preferred \$1.8 million per year without applying the \$900,000 to this year's budget.

Councilor Peruzzotti noted that although she did not vote in favor at last week's COW meeting, she will vote in favor tonight.

Councilor de la Cruz agrees with Councilor Watson that if more Pfizer buildings come off the tax rolls, future years could be difficult. He will not support the resolution.

Rep. Cerf suggested that such future difficulties will force the Town to take the necessary steps to trim the budget.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor Flax, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Somers and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 2 - Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Frink

X. OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION to suspend the rules to vote on the Golf Ranger job description was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik and so voted unanimously.

2014-0165

Golf Ranger Job Description

GOLF RANGER JOB DESCRIPTION

RESOLVED, that the job description for the position of Golf Ranger in the Parks & Recreation Department is hereby approved as attached.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Adopted.

The history and details of this position were described by the Town Manager.

The motion carried unanimously

XI. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Janet L. Downs, Deputy Town Clerk